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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 000406

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR G, INL, INL/T, EUR/UBI, EUR/ERA, WHA/CAR  
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BRUSSELS FOR USEU, LEGATT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR KCRM NS NL

SUBJECT: SCHIPHOL INTERDICTION - MINISTRY OF JUSTICE CLAIMS  
SUCCESS, EXPANDS PROGRAM AND LOOKS FOR WAYS TO SHARE COURIER  
INFORMATION

REF: (A) PARAMARIBO 111 (B) 03 THE HAGUE 3197  
(C) 03 THE HAGUE 2527 (D) BROOKS-MANN E-MAILS

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Seeing positive results from its efforts to cut off the flow of cocaine from the Caribbean through Schiphol, the Justice Ministry is expanding its interdiction efforts to cover couriers of "small" amounts of drugs and to flights from Suriname. The Ministry is exploring ways to share its courier information with interested countries.  
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Claiming success in his interdiction efforts at Schiphol airport, Justice Minister Donner announced in early February that ALL drug couriers from the Netherlands Antilles caught at Schiphol would be prosecuted. When the program began on December 11 (reftel C), only those couriers caught with more than 3 kilos of drugs were prosecuted because of fears the Dutch judicial system would be overwhelmed otherwise. Those caught with less than 3 kilos surrendered their drugs and were returned to their originating country without criminal sanction. Their names, however, are entered into an airline blacklist. Airlines continuing to carry passengers on the blacklist run the risk of losing their Schiphol landing rights.

¶3. (U) Ministry officials claim the interdiction policy has been a success and the number of people trafficking drugs has fallen dramatically, thereby ending the judicial logjam and making possible the move to 100% prosecution. Minister Donner noted "there are regularly flights on which no couriers are arriving, or at most one or two. Previously there were dozens of people." During the first five days the policy went into effect in December, 89 cases were investigated or prosecuted and 31 were returned to their place of origin. For the week of January 15, 2004, 21 people were detained and 13 were returned.

¶4. (U) Following a visit to Suriname by a Justice Ministry delegation (reftel A), Donner announced that Surinamese flights would also be subject to enhanced scrutiny. (NOTE: This amounts to five additional flights a week for the interdiction teams to watch.) That policy went into effect February 11. The Justice Ministry suspected drug traffickers were relocating from the Netherlands Antilles to Suriname to avoid detection at Schiphol.

¶5. (SBU) Global officer met with Arie IJzerman, MOJ Director of International Criminal Affairs and Drugs Policy, February 11 and discussed the need for the Dutch to share their information on the drug couriers. IJzerman said the Dutch had informed their EU partners about the Schiphol interdiction effort and many, particularly the French, expressed concern about how drug traffickers might transit their countries to avoid Schiphol. They were interested in getting access to the courier information for law enforcement and border control purposes. The Global officer reminded IJzerman the U.S. had also asked for the courier information in discussions last October as the Dutch were formulating the new policy (ref D).

¶6. (SBU) IJzerman said the Justice Ministry was looking into the possibility of information sharing. One option under consideration was to share the information with Customs Services, with the restriction that it could not be used for prosecution. Once a courier is convicted in the Netherlands, IJzerman noted, the Ministry is able to share that information with foreign law enforcement officials. He admitted, however, that using the courier information for visa purposes posed a problem, which the Ministry was looking into.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT: We are pleased the Justice Ministry is expanding the scope of its interdiction efforts. We remain skeptical, however, how long they will be sustained. Meanwhile, we will continue to press the Ministry to overcome the legal obstacles, occasioned by Dutch privacy

concerns, preventing information sharing of data on the couriers. Such an effort has a greater chance of success now that the Netherlands' EU partners have expressed interest in the information as well. END COMMENT.

SOBEL